

How to Get to Hell[©]

By Ramesh Richard, Ph.D, Th.D.

www.rameshrichard.com

Today, I have to speak on a tough subject: **hell**. I hate hell with everything I've got. Why? Because I don't want anyone to go there. And neither does God.

But the sad truth is that *you and I deserve to go to hell*. It's only by God's grace that we have another option: to go to heaven. However, if we don't willingly choose that option, we will get to hell without even trying. Let me explain how that could happen.

The Worst Four-Letter Word

The English language contains a lot of four-letter words, some of which are profane. The use of these terms demonstrates "the coarseness of a person and the culture he presents." Unfortunately, in our culture, bad words have become so common that people hardly even notice them.

To me, the term "hell" is the worst obscenity of all. Why? Because of the terrible suffering and hopelessness that it represents. People sometimes use the term "hell" in a tongue-in-cheek manner to describe something they find challenging, unpleasant or difficult to do. For example, people may say:

- Life is hell.
- Work is hell.
- Marriage is hell.
- Children are hell.
- Parents are hell.
- Taxes are hell.

A village called "Hell" exists in the Grand Cayman Islands in the Caribbean. Tourists there tell jokes like, "I am going to Hell today" or "I've been to Hell and back." They even send their family and friends "postcards from Hell." However, the hell I am talking about is not a tropical vacation paradise. Far from it!

My purpose for raising the subject of "how to get to hell" is to help you think about it in a new way. My goal is to **give you directions for how to stay away from hell and go to heaven instead!** Think of this message as a "save-the-date" postcard; I'm offering you the opportunity to reverse your spiritual destiny.

Three Audiences

I've identified three primary groups of people in my audience. These types of people possess a range of beliefs about hell as a plausibility, a possibility, and a probability. Most likely, you fit into one of these three categories.

The Skeptic: If you're a skeptic, you refuse to believe in hell, regardless of the evidence showing that it may exist. You have a strong sense of justice, and you don't believe that people should "unjustly" be sent to hell. You also wonder why people should experience eternal retribution (payback) for temporal earthly sins.

"There's probably no God. Now stop worrying and start enjoying life," declared an atheist bus campaign in the United Kingdom in 2008. Many people live according to the philosophy that there probably is no God. Many also have the attitude, "There's probably no **hell**." But the idea that "God and hell probably don't exist" is too risky. It denies all the evidence to the contrary and doesn't stand up as a rational argument. In addition, it provides no spiritual or emotional assurance when we consider our final destination.

The Doubter: If you're a doubter, you're a thoughtful person who has questions about hell, but you've chosen to withhold judgment. You would believe in hell if you had reliable information showing that hell did exist. You realize that "What happens after death?" is a crucial question because the stakes are so high. You are willing to consider authorities other than yourself on a matter in which you yourself have limited information. You have questions about hell's reality, proportion, and fairness, but you also see a need for hell for *those who deserve it*, because there are some very evil people in the world. Hell is necessary for those who have committed great horrors: crusades, terrorism, inquisitions, murder, and the like.

You also realize that hell is necessary for a few who *want* to go there. Some people are so antagonistic toward God that they actually WANT to go to hell. I know of one atheist who calls God a "cosmic rapist" who consigns billions of people to hell. Therefore, this man wants to go to hell, away from God. That's a bad decision, especially because people like him are welcome to reverse their final destination.

If a person wants to go to hell, in spite of all he presently knows, God allows that person the privilege of choosing against God and permanently facing the consequences of that choice. However, if a person wants to go to heaven, in spite of all he presently does *not* know, God gives that person the privilege of choosing to spend eternity in heaven and enjoying the positive consequences.

The Believer: You may be a critical and thoughtful person who believes in hell. This makes you a wise, not a gullible, person. You believe in a biblical version of hell; you don't believe in every version of hell that you have heard. Because a post-earth hell is a probable reality, one of only two eternal alternatives, you trust that its existence is very likely.

Three Additional Groups Who Need to Know about Hell

There are three additional groups of people who need to know the truth about hell. But these people, for practical, spiritual, or psychological reasons, do not entertain questions about hell. They are:

The Ignorant: These people don't know anything about hell. (If you are one of them, you won't be able to use that excuse anymore after this!) But ignorance can be cured with knowledge. Medical doctors sometimes couch this "curse of ignorance" in jargon. For example, consider the diagnosis of a patient with "idiopathic cardiomyopathy." "Cardiomyopathy" simply means that something is wrong with the heart. "Idiopathic cardiomyopathy" means, "We have no idea what is wrong with the heart. However, we are going to treat you for it, and we are also going to charge you for the treatment!" The truth is that you are responsible to plan for your spiritual future. Ignorance about hell is no excuse.

The Fearful: These people are fearful of hell; therefore, they are in denial about its existence. They don't want to believe that there could be a hell at all, and they hold this point of view irrationally or emotionally. Others may feel that hell is inevitable; therefore, they are simply victims or pawns. So they try not to think about hell and just live for the moment. But denial is a psychological (and potentially pathological) condition. By denying something, you may think that it won't happen to you. But denial won't keep you out of hell.

The Apathetic: These people don't care if there is a hell, and they don't care if they go there or not. They don't want to find out more; they'd rather not think about what they intuitively know. You may have heard the distinction between ignorance and apathy: "I don't know; and I don't care."

Here's an illustration about the dangers of apathy: Business in hell was slowing down, so the board of directors called an emergency meeting about how they could prevent as many as possible from going to heaven. Demon #1 said, "I'll go back to earth and convince people that there's no heaven."

"That won't do," said Satan. "People have heaven on their minds."

Then I'll convince them that there is no hell," said a second demon.

"That won't do," said Satan. "People have hell on their minds."

A third demon in the back of the room stood up and said, "If you let me go back to earth, I can fill this place. I'll just convince them that there is no hurry. I'll make them apathetic." That decision was unanimously affirmed in hell.

Hell as a Plausible Reality

Hell as a *plausible reality* calls for critical thought. One author defines *critical thinking* as "the practice of thinking things through, in which one carefully *describes* something (an

event, a book, a movie, a person, etc) and *evaluates* it according to some relevant criterion, considering significant alternatives.”

Hell is an *extraordinary* concept, and our knowledge about it cannot be found in the usual ways—especially scientific knowledge via repeated experiments in a controlled environment. So the existence of hell is often questioned as false or unsound.

Critical thinkers (those with critical minds rather than critical spirits) will point to hell as a concept that people have always taken for granted and never questioned because their beliefs make hell plausible, not necessarily because hell exists. The idea is that because these plausibility structures (or religions) give power to the belief in hell, hell exists, but it cannot be critically evaluated.

We all know that people want to believe something to be true; therefore, they hold it to be true, and then supposedly it becomes true. For example, the Gem of Tanzania was once thought to be most valuable jewel of its kind in the world. It also “once famously appeared as the principal asset on the balance sheet of a bankrupt construction company [and now] has been revealed to be little more than an expensive paperweight. The 2.1 kg (4.6 lb) rock is now believed to be a large lump of *anyolite*, a low-grade form of ruby, with a value of just £100.” The only thing which gave this gem value was people’s *belief* that it was valuable. When finally examined, the gem was simply a lump of stone with value because of its history of belief, not because it was valuable in itself.

But we should we consider hell to be true just because people believe it to be true? It’s interesting that ALL, not just a few, of the major religions of the world have concepts of the post-death fate of the wicked and retributive judgment. Even if they disagree about what hell is like (one thinks it is hot forever, and another cold at times), how long it extends (eternally or temporarily), and its purpose (from fearful deterrent to personal retribution), ALL RELIGIONS agree on the reality of hell!

What if hell is not the result of religious beliefs, and religions instead were the result of the prior plausibility of hell? Perhaps justice requires a universal underlying need for hell in order to contain evil forever.

To say that hell has a zero chance of existence negates human physiological, psychological and intellectual needs. Other basic human needs are met by real solutions—there is something indefinable but sensed as love, because humans have the “need” for love. There is something really nourishing as food and water, because humans have a need for food and water. Now, this internal, visceral need for eternal justice, especially for the wicked, may just present its *plausible* reality. So while we are not looking for mathematical certainty about hell, a gut-level sense for the need for a punitive hell tips the argument towards the plausibility of hell.

Here’s a great illustration. “Two friends from the same village went to school and high school together. One returned to his father’s farm; the other went on to the highest studies in philosophy and turned atheist. He thought he went from childish ignorance to educated

uncertainty. When they met after many years, the prideful philosopher wanted to impress his childhood farmer friend.

“Have you seen hell?” asked the atheist.

“No” said the farmer.

“Have you ever smelled hell?” asked the atheist again.

“No,” said the farmer.

“Well, then,” said the atheist with pride written all over his face. “How can you be so sure there is a hell?”

The farmer replied with his own set of questions to the atheist, “Professor, have you ever seen your brains?”

“No,” said the atheist.

“And have you ever smelled your brains?”

“No,” said the atheist.

“Then how can you be so sure you have any brains?” he asked.

Point well taken!

Hell as a Possibility

Hell as a *possible* reality calls for justified belief. A theologian once said to a philosopher: “You are a blind man in a dark room looking for a black cat that is not there!”

The philosopher replied, “And you have *found* the black cat that is not there!”

Philosophers will tell us that one can’t generally argue from plausibility to possibility, from concept to existence. Theologians reply that it can be done only in the existence-as-necessary-to-concept cases. For example, philosophers say, “Just because all humans have a concept of a perfect being (God), that doesn’t mean that he exists.” Theologians reply, “But if he doesn’t exist, he isn’t a perfect being, since existence is necessary to perfection.”

You may want to ask yourself why no greater possible suffering than eternal hell can be conceived by human beings, and if this extraordinary situation in some way necessitates hell’s existence. So many people deserve hell, and a few even want to go to hell. And most people want evil to be restrained and contained forever.

In the case of the possibility of hell, we don’t have to be in total fear and denial, for logical, theological, or psychological reasons. We have information about hell that must be evaluated for justified belief and actionable knowledge.

What sources of information do you use?

A large part of what you know comes from information you glean from a secondary, credible source. You can be the wise evaluator of such information.

In epistemology, this way of knowing arises from an *appeal to credible authority*. For example, if you have not heard of Gangtok, Sikkim, a remote and beautiful place nearly on top of the world, you will have to take it on others' "revelation" that there is such a place. Those who were born there or have been there, those who have taken pictures there, or information you find on a website can confirm to you that the place exists. In fact, a great number of tourists go there as a destination site, based on *other* people's testimonials. Then Gangtok, Sikkim, goes from a plausible reality to a possible reality on the basis of wise appeal to credible authority.

One's appeal to authority is false if it relies on inappropriate authority. If a source doesn't possess the expertise and/or the character that the piece of information demands, you shouldn't make him a reliable source on the subject. Check "urban legends" websites for tall tales without credible sources that are perpetuated as general knowledge!

We also find this false use of authority in television commercials, where celebrities endorse products from cars to computers, even though they have no expertise on the product. This contributes to their lack of integrity. An adoring public buys products about which the celebrity knows nothing. Don't be gullible! If the source appealed to as an authority is untruthful or unproven, he should not be considered an authority on the subject. If the person is knowledgeable and truthful, he is a reliable and credible source of information.

Is there a credible source of information on hell?

Let's look at the information we have on hell from one of the greatest men in history; then, let's consider if he should be considered appropriate authority on the subject. You may have heard of Jesus, whom some people worship as the Son of God. Whether Jesus is the Son of God or not, he is one of the greatest men in all history. He claims to have expert knowledge about hell and then proves that he is a credible source with trustworthy character through his words and acts, which include even rising from the dead.

Features of Hell: Jesus reveals two features about hell.

- 1) Hell is *permanent*. It lasts forever. It never stops existing. Jesus says hell is "eternal," which means unceasing and forever.
- 2) Hell is *painful*. I want you to think of horror movies or the most horrific sights that you have seen, scenes which make you afraid and want to vomit. Think of scenes that evoke deep sympathy and make you want to immediately act toward a suffering human being. Take those scenes and intensify the horror a million times; complicate its fear a billion times; extend it a trillion times into forever and forever. Then we may be starting to understand the concept of a painful eternity in hell, filled with unmitigated and unending suffering.

Images of Hell: This same Jesus, a credible and reliable source of information on hell, used several descriptive words and phrases to describe hell as eternal death.

a. **Dustbin and wastebasket of the universe:** Hell is like the garbage dump or the trash container of the universe. Maggots and creeping things occupy the rubble. On occasion, I help my wife by taking out the garbage in our house. I never have to check to see if anything valuable has been placed in there. Only what is worthless waste and useless junk—the irreparable, the unredeemable, the unsellable on eBay auction sites—is placed in those garbage bags.

b. **Darkness and night:** People in hell are said to be banished to outer darkness. You've been to weddings at which, inside the banquet hall, there is joy and light and festivity; outside, there is night. Jesus presents hell as joyless, hopeless, endless night. Have you ever been truly lost in the dark in an unfamiliar place? Your imagination can drive you crazy—a noise here, a scratch there, an unidentified person nearby. No lights at all. That's what hell is like.

c. **Detention:** meaning life imprisonment. Hell is eternal life imprisonment without parole, with no way to escape (not even death). Jesus says there's an unbridgeable gulf fixed, from there to the opposite destination. I went to see a young friend in prison once. His 30-day incarceration was long, but the possibility of release kept his hopes alive as he counted each day. What if he didn't have the hope of release?

d. **Distress of the harshest imaginable kind:** Jesus uses the term “unquenchable fire” in his descriptions. You know there's nothing more painful than fire. Go to a hospital burn unit where people are burned or undergoing burn treatment, and you can hear deep moaning and terrible groaning. Jesus warned us of real fire, eternal fire. He did not explain the physical or chemical content of the fire. People in hell will have bodies, but they won't die. Jesus repeated an unusual phrase about hell: “their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.” He “placed internal pain (the worm) and external pain (unquenchable fire) side by side.”

e. **Devastation:** The phrase “weeping and grinding of teeth” is used several times by Jesus to describe those who find themselves in hell. There is neither love nor laughter, not kissing, not even whistling. “Weeping” is terrible sorrow, regret, deepest sense of loss. Have you ever lost people or property? Well, in hell, you never get over your grief. It only intensifies daily—the loss of loved ones, the possessions for which you worked for, the hobbies you enjoyed, and memories of them. Hell also means the loss of what God thought about you. He presently thinks about you as valuable, salvageable, redeemable. But in hell, you will have to assert and fend for yourself against others who will assert and fend for themselves. Every one will be as free and powerful (or powerless) as everyone else...in the deadlock of freedom. In hell, there will be total selfish anarchy.

Here's a simulation of hell's anarchy. Let's suppose that in the middle of hell there was a large pot of stew (that is, if there were food in hell). The stew smells delicious. All around this pot are people who are starving and in desperation. They all hold spoons in their hands. These spoons have unusually long handles that reach all the way into the pot. But because the spoon handles are longer than their arms, the people are unable to

return full spoons of delicious stew to their own mouths, even though they are famished. Their suffering is terrible and continuous. But they never think that while they cannot feed themselves, they could easily feed each other. Hell is selfish, by definition.

“Grinding or gnashing of teeth”—this could mean gritting your teeth in the face of pain and danger. It’s impossible to smile or laugh while gnashing your teeth. Just imagine living without laughter. I can imagine living without pain, but living without laughter? I can’t imagine having no outlet for all the intrinsically and authentically human joys: creativity, aesthetics, music, education, loving sex, meaning, purpose, or art—some of the very things that make humans human. Hell will rob you of red-blooded, full-throttled life.

Growing up in India, I would watch young bamboo basket weavers behind our home who would burn the scrap bamboo in the open space beside our house. The fire would send a trail of graying smoke into the wintry sky and a foul smell into our home. We would play cricket barefoot, and the ball would sometimes get lost into the scrap heap. We’d go looking for those expensive tennis or cricket balls gingerly treading on the smoldering bamboo scraps. When occasionally burned, we would yell, and run to the water faucet and open the taps. In hell there will be burning, but not watering.

Hell is a place of refuse, not refuge.

Neurologists say that the human brain is a fantastic instrument. It contains a permanent record of your past that is like a single, continuous movie strip of your whole waking life, from childhood on. You can again live those scenes from the past, one at a time, if a surgeon applies a gentle electrical current to a certain point on the temporal cortex of your brain. When that happens, your brain will play your movie. Whenever judgment comes, all that needs to be done is to hit the play button and the movie of your life will start, including options you could have taken, your destiny that could have been reversed, thoughts and actions that were committed and omitted. Your own movie will scare you more than the worst horror movies you’ve seen, because it will evoke judgment.

Now, there are other descriptions of hell in God’s word that I have left out. For example, hell is a bottomless abyss, a picture of hell as voracious, greedy, and ravenous. This bottomless pit imagery speaks to our primal fear of falling. Have you ever dreamed of falling, falling, falling without anything to hold you up? What about falling permanently? I never want you to experience these tragic, terrifying events. That’s why I am telling you about the alternative.

Trust in Jesus

All of these scary images of hell seem strange coming from the lips of the most loving person who ever lived—Jesus, the Son of God. Perhaps he was wrong. How could we view him as an expert on the subject and personally trustworthy?

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We can trust him because he claims expert knowledge on hell, and he follows through by clearly and painstakingly describing its nature, quality, composition, constituencies, timing, entrance, and his own authoritative role in who will go there. Jesus is a trustworthy source. His extraordinary knowledge about hell should definitely get your attention!

Jesus doesn't talk about hell with relish like some priests, preachers, and movie producers do. He doesn't want to consign human beings there. The Bible says that God does not want anyone to perish. In fact, Jesus weeps over this possibility, and he sends his followers all over the world to give the message of salvation to all people without discrimination, regardless of background, culture, religion, or language.

Jesus speaks about the origins and purpose of hell in first-person declarations. He says that hell was created to house the devil and his angels. He says that he himself saw the prime occupants of hell being judged and thrown out of heaven. That insider information should receive our attention.

Then, as the ultimate demonstration of trustworthiness, Jesus dies for the sake of his teachings. He goes through his own "hell" on a Roman cross for humanity's sake so we won't have to experience hell ourselves.

Good-minded and stouthearted people are usually willing to die for what they believe to be true, though it may be false. But people will not willingly die for something they know to be false. Jesus gave his life to rescue us from hell.

Lastly, God shows his approval of Jesus as the Savior of all people. How? By raising him from the dead. How could Jesus, the Son of God, be raised from the dead—the only historically verifiable self-resurrection in history—if he was a liar and not trustworthy? That should receive our attention.

So Jesus is not only expertly knowledgeable, he is a trustworthy source on hell. In fact, Jesus is the **ONLY** knowledgeable and trustworthy source who gives hope at the end. All others simply *hope* to give hope at the end.

Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard told the story about a circus that caught fire. The flames from the circus fire speedily spread to the fields surrounding the circus grounds and began to burn toward the village below. The circus master, convinced that the village would be destroyed and the people killed unless they were warned, asked if there was anybody who could go the village and warn the people. The clown, dressed in full costume, jumped on a bicycle and sped down the hill to the village below.

"Run for your lives! Run for your lives! A fire is coming and the village is going to burn!" he shouted as he rode up and down the streets of the village. "The village is going to burn! Run for your lives!"

Curious villagers came out of their houses and shops and stood along the sidewalks. They shouted back to the clown, laughing and applauding his performance. The more desperately the clown shouted, the more the villages cheered.

The village burned down and the loss of life was great because no one took the clown seriously. After all, he was just a clown.

You may not take Jesus' version of hell seriously, for he may not seem to be an authoritative and trustworthy announcer. He looked like an ordinary mortal, not like God. If he was God, he would have access to the correct information about hell and heaven. But you gently nod and cheer him on, ignoring his message, while your life is at stake. That's not the wisest and best response.

I have entrusted my whole life, now and into the future with Jesus. Don't dismiss Jesus' knowledge of hell just because he doesn't look like the rescuer you think he should look like.

Hell as a Probable Reality

Hell as a *probable* reality calls for your personal response. Let's get personal. Look at your life situation right now. Examine your life, your actions, your values, your beliefs, and your future. Can you detect that God has been moving toward you through nature, history, and your conscience? Can you sense that he wanted you to hear this message?

I can't change your mind and heart, but I want to improve your decision making process and present the big picture. Because eternity is forever, only longer. I have borrowed the theory of probability from some "basic mathematics symbolization." In mathematics, an unlikely occurrence of an event is closer to a zero, and a likely event is closer to a 1. In probability theory, they "identify *all* different outcomes that could occur and then establish its likelihood."

In life-after-death, there are only two possible outcomes, so the probability of one of the two options happening is very high. The probability that hell exists is much closer to a 1 than to a 0. You have the option today to change your direction and you will reach your new destination—HEAVEN!

The Perspective of Wisdom

Let's take the perspective of wisdom—in the sense of risk analysis and risk management. You do risk analysis all the time. For example, should I leave the house when it is raining outside? Should I get on a plane? Is the aircraft and airline reliable? Should I drive when the drivers are likely intoxicated? We assess risk continuously and intuitively, as well as by other people's testimony and experience.

Here's the challenge: "Just because the speaker doesn't prove there is a hell doesn't mean there isn't." And, conversely, "Just because the author proves there is no hell, doesn't mean there isn't a hell." The existence and non-existence of hell doesn't depend on my ability to prove anything. All people on the earth are on this life side of a potentially eternal decision.

However, if you are wise, you are being called to a more *formal* risk-analysis, a decision analysis of the conditions of your real-world life, and your potential eternal future. "But *formal risk analysis* and risk management can help you to assess these risks and decide what actions to take to minimize (danger and) disruptions to your plans." You can no longer be casual about this matter. Not if you are wise person.

One way to calculate risk is by the following value: "*risk = probability of event x cost of event*." Make your best estimate of the probability of the event occurring, and multiply this by the amount it will cost you to set things right if it happens. This gives you a value for the risk."

Death is not a probability; it is a certainty, whether you are young or old. We are all going to die. Air France Flight 447 left Sao Paulo for Paris and suddenly went missing in mid-2009. All passengers and crew died. An Italian woman, Johanna Ganthaler, arrived late for the fatal flight, so she boarded a later flight and avoided being a victim of the horrible crash. Grateful for the escape, she and her husband rented a car in Munich, Germany, and decided to drive home to Italy. In Austria, their car swerved into the wrong lane and was hit head-on by a truck. Johanna died at the hospital.

My friends, death is certain. When our time has come, there is nothing we can do to prolong the inevitable. (If you'd like to read more about the certainty of death, please watch my channel on youtube.com.) I want you to grasp hell's reality. Its cost is horrific.

Jesus made a case for Himself as a trustworthy Source who has the ability to save us from hell. God would not have needed to raise Jesus from the dead if Jesus' claims had been false. But God did have to raise Jesus from the dead, because Christ's claims were true.

Because you have received expert information, you would be wise to accept God's provision of salvation. You are highly vulnerable to the risk of hell, and once a person enters hell, it is permanent and painful. There is NO WAY OUT. The only way to avoid hell is to choose to accept and follow Christ!

The Perspective of Trust

Business educators tell us that in contingency planning, risk may be managed in at least two ways: 1) by using existing assets; 2) by investing in new resources.

- *By using existing assets:* In the case of your live on this earth, you possess some moral assets—you do good works, try to treat other people well, feed the hungry, go to church, temple and mosque.

But in the case of eternity in the next life, you have NO assets. The Bible says that all people have sinned and all of us have fallen short of the glory of God. Your existing assets, especially your moral behavior, just gets you into further trouble. Why? Because we all make mistakes; none of us is perfect.

That's the sadness of it. You and I don't have to do any thing to get to hell. **We are already going there.** We are intensifying the speed of our descent every day with our imperfect words and actions. In hell, we would have no assets, because there would be no further opportunities. Hell is a continuous reality.

Your only hope is found through option 2: *by investing in new resources.*

- *By investing in new resources:* Your risk analysis should give you the basis for deciding whether to bring in new resources to counter the risk. Here you will find someone else to carry your risk. This new resource strategy is particularly important where the risk is so great as to threaten your solvency. The only way to avoid risk is to utilize your new resource.

That's what the Lord Jesus offers. Today he can be your new resource. He has already carried your risk. Through his sacrifice for you, you can be certain about the future. There is no other way of salvation from hell.

Listen to what the Lord Jesus said about himself for our sake, providing an early warning system:

Indeed, God did not send the Son [Jesus] into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. (The Bible—John 3:17□18).

Notice these assertions drawn from Jesus' words above:

1. God didn't send His Son (Jesus) into the world to condemn the world. Yes, there's a hell, and it exists. But Jesus came to save us, not to damn us to hell.

2. God sent His Son (Jesus) in order that the world might be saved. You and I can be saved from condemnation. Jesus is God's Savior, our Rescuer, the Liberator of the human race.

3. Those who believe in Jesus are not condemned. You don't want to go to hell? Believe in Jesus; he is the expert on hell. Further, Jesus is trustworthy to save you. Call on him to save you. If you believe in him, you will not be condemned.

4. But those who do not believe are condemned already. If we don't believe in Him, we are already condemned. We don't have to do anything to get to hell. We are already headed there. My title is a mis-title, but it is not misleading. How do you get to hell? Just keep on as you are. You are heading there even without trying. You are condemned already. A man picked up a book entitled, "How to Go to Hell," and the pages were blank. Most people believe it is hard to get to hell and easy to get to heaven. It's actually not at all hard to get into hell.

5. Why? Because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. I want to make two comments here:

a. Notice that Jesus is a specific and unique person—the Only Son of God. He is God's only Son. God does not bear biological sons like you and I bear sons. Jesus is not God's spiritual son, like we can be the sons of God. God's only Son is a one-of-a-kind son, different from us. God's only Son is the only Savior.

b. Notice that you need to believe in His name—His name is Jesus...or in many languages, Yesu, Jesu, Hesus, Isa, Yeshua, Jesus. You have to believe in his name.

What does it mean to believe in Jesus? It's basically this: You believe in him as your trustworthy Savior. You don't have to do anything to get to hell; but you have to believe in Jesus to reverse your destiny. Not only believe *that* he can save you from hell, but believe *in* him to save you from hell. You can believe *that* he has the expertise; but you have to believe *in* him as trustworthy. You don't have to do anything to get to hell; but you have to believe someone, God's Son, to reverse your final destination.

That is, you admit you are dying and descending into hell and that you deserve to get there because you have offended a perfect God. Your wrongs, your failures, your sins—these have all offended God, and you don't want to continue in them for eternity.

Admit to God that you are willing to trust the One who went through hell for you so you can be rescued from hell forever. He took your place for your offenses; he paid for your sin; he risked his life for you and died; and he invites you to entrust your life to him as your only Savior.

That decision reverses your destiny, changes your destination away from hell, and guides you in a new direction to the opposite side of eternity. Heaven too could be plausible, possible, and probable, but now with the Son of God rescuing you, heaven becomes certain.

I do not write or speak on this subject with glee, hate, or superiority, and I hope you have been able to sense that. I care about you and I want you to spend eternity with God, not

in hell. Jesus gave His life to bring you salvation, and I thought I'd spend some time helping you understand that. God raised Jesus from the dead in order to guarantee you deliverance.

You get to make a decision right now. You can ask God to reverse the course of your life away from your decline into eternal hell. All you have to do is to trust Jesus to save you from your sins. Or you can say to God, "I want you to leave me alone." That, my friend, is something that God will do when you get to hell, **but not until then**. The fact that you are reading this shows that he is not leaving you alone! He wants you to hear this message.

Jesus said about himself, "The Father loves the Son and has placed all things (especially the coming judgment) into his hands. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but must endure God's wrath" (The Bible—John 3:35□36). Will you trust him, embrace him, and receive him as **Your only Savior**? If you do that, he will remove hell's risk factor from your future.

I close with an adaptation of a fine story for our purposes. A girl whose rich father had died lived with her well-to-do mother in an upstairs room. One night a fire broke out in the house. The girl's mother perished before she could reach the little girl. The girl's private nurse rushed upstairs to try to save the girl, but the door was locked. She, too, died in the fire. Next came the girl's teacher, but by the time she arrived, it was too late. The doors were blocked by the flames, and the teacher died too. The fire continued to spread throughout the mansion. The girl's room was surrounded by flames.

The neighbors could hear the little girl's cries from the bedroom. They called the fire department, but they feared that the firefighters would arrive too late to save the little girl trapped upstairs.

Suddenly a man appeared with a tall ladder, raised it against the side of the house, climbed the ladder, broke a window and disappeared into the house. It took him a few minutes to find the girl. Soon he reappeared at the window with her in his arms. The fire was about to consume the house, so he jumped from the upper floor just as an ambulance arrived. His face reflected the pain in his broken leg as he limped to deliver the girl to the paramedics, who rushed her to the hospital. Then the man disappeared into the crowd.

A few months later, the little girl appeared before a judge who had the responsibility of placing her into a foster home. She had no living relatives, so the judge decided to interview several prospects as guardians for her. The little girl was present in the courtroom during these lengthy proceedings.

The first person requesting custody of the child was her mother's friend, also a mother with compassion for kids. She said she knew her mother, and had much experience with little girls. She offered the little girl a wholesome environment, where she would learn the principles of hard work and the simple life.

The second person was a nurse, a friend of the girl's private nurse who died. Having been alone all her life, she needed companionship but could help this young lady in need. She

revealed the balance of her bank accounts, and everyone was amazed by how much wealth she had accumulated. “I can give this child anything she needs or wants. I will provide her with the finest of clothes and send her to the best of schools. If she lives with me, she will have whatever her heart desires,” she said. “Further, I have connections to fine medical personnel who could guarantee good health.”

Then came a school teacher, a friend of the private teacher. She pointed out to the judge that the child would need a good education, and as a teacher, she could make sure that the girl learned a great deal.

“Does any else have anything to say before I make my decision?” asked the judge.

Just then a man came forward from the back of the court room. He walked very slowly with a pronounced limp. When he got to the front of the room, he stood directly facing the little girl and held out his arms. The crowd gasped. His hands and his arms were terribly scarred from burns.

“This is the man who saved me!” cried the little girl. She ran up to the man and threw her arms around his neck, just as she had on the day of the fire. She buried her face in his shoulder, looked up and smiled with grin that lit up the courtroom.

“I think I’ve just made my decision,” said the judge. And the court was adjourned.

You see, my friend, when it comes to the reality of hell, we need more than our mothers, teachers, and nurses. They all have their helpful roles to fulfill. Your beloved *nation*, like a parent, gave birth to you; your *culture* is like your nurse who brought you up; your *religion* has been your teacher, giving you wisdom and morality. Our nations, cultures and religions have their advantages, but they will not keep us from hell. What you and I need is a Savior—and that, my friend, is what God offers you through his only Son, Jesus. Trusting in Jesus as our Savior is the only way we can stop our path to hell and start a trajectory toward heaven instead.

Many questions may still exist in your heart and mind. You can write to us about them. However, the truth is that you need to make a decision for Christ **today**. Talk to God in prayer. Confess your sin, admit your faith in Jesus, and embrace the help that has been sent, like I did.

Reverse Your Destiny!